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“SLOW LEARNERS- A UNIVERSAL PROBLEM AND PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO THEM TO BE A SUCCESSFUL LEARNER”

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Abstract

Education plays an important role in a country's development. Parents strongly feel that learning should be cultivated among their children. A teacher can make this become true with his teaching efficiency. But sometimes they may fail to do such due to different reasons. There are different types of learners such as fast learners, average learners, and slow learners. This learning difficulty may arise from poor memory, unawareness about the importance of education and lack of fundamental knowledge and psychological factors. If the teacher can bring out the children's inner talents through the use of different conditions, slow learners will be happier at learning. This article tries to solve this universal problem by applying an inspiring quote from the universal scientist Albert Einstein saying "I never teach my pupils. I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn". Data was collected through the Case study method. Counseling was used as a tool for their enhancement. The major finding was that slow learners were more successful by providing suitable conditions and educational opportunities to them.

Keywords

Teaching Efficiency, Happy Learning, Slow Learners, Universal Problem

1. Introduction

Discipline of Education that is concerned with methods of teaching and learning in schools or school-like environments as opposed to various non-formal and informal means of socialization. Education can be thought of as the transmission of the values and accumulated knowledge of a society. In this sense, it is equivalent to what social scientists term socialization or enculturation.

The attempt to apply the scientific method to the study of education dates back to the German philosopher Johann Friedrich Herbart, who called for the application of psychology to the art of teaching. But not until the end of the 19th century, when the German psychologist Wilhelm Max Wundt established the first psychological laboratory at the University of Leipzig in 1879, serious efforts made to separate psychology from philosophy. Wundt's monumental *Principles of Physiological Psychology* (1874) had a significant effect on education in the 20th century. Besides the specific applications of measurement, counseling, and clinical psychology, psychology contributed to education through studies of cognition, information processing, the technology of instruction, and learning styles.

Education plays an important role in a country's development. Parents strongly feel that happy learning should be cultivated among their children. A teacher can make this become true with his teaching efficiency. But sometimes they may fail to do such due to different reasons. There are different types of learners including fast learners, average learners, and slow learners. This learning difficulty may arise from poor memory, unawareness about the importance of education and lack of fundamental knowledge and psychological factors. If the teacher can bright out the children's inner talents through the use of different conditions, slow learners will be happier at learning.

Slow learners are not special children, but they need special instructional techniques. If the teacher can find the strengths and inner talents of a slow learner, it can give positive reinforcement and make them think about their studies for betterment in their progress, otherwise, they may lose their confidence and become a dropout and finally, they are treated as illiterates. Usually, slow learners try to sit in the backbenches only. It may be a great loss to the nation sometimes due to

these last bench students. Because The best brains of the nation may be found on the last benches of the classroom (Dr. A. P.J. Abdul kalam). If we try to improve the slow learners' education by providing educational opportunities, then they would be successful learners as well as literacy rate will be improved. So that the slow learner's education and their betterment will improve the literacy rate and they may be the nation builders in the future. Hence, they are important for the country's development.

1.1 Who are Slow Learners?

Society expects much from its schools, both in terms of general education and vocational training. The school plays a pivotal role in human resource development. The task of the teachers in schools is a challenging one. Teaching is one of the toughest jobs there because the teacher must do many things. He must be a good leader, an effective speaker, a quick diagnostician, a tactful diplomat, and a firm, fair disciplinarian. Effective teaching is an intelligent application of psychological principles to solve the practical problems encountered in the teaching-learning process. Teaching slow learners is an arduous task. Their ability to deal with abstract and symbolic materials, that is, language, number and concepts are very limited and their reasoning in practical situations is inferior to that of average students. These pupils differ slightly from normal students in learning ability. They are also unable to deal with relatively complex games and school assignments. They need much external stimulation and encouragement to do simple types of work. These students who are known to be slow to 'catch on' are called slow learners or backward learners.

"Slow learners are children whose performance is poor in schools yet are not eligible for special education; their intelligence test scores are too high for consideration as a child with mental retardation" (Mercer, 1996) (MacMillan, Gresham, Bocian, & Lambros, 1998). Although slow learners may have special educational needs, they do not fit into the special education system (MacMillan, Gresham, Bocian, & Lambros, 1998).

2. Identification of Slow Learners

Slow learners' identification among normal children in a classroom is a difficult task because the children having low IQ performing well in other activities rather than their academic performance. And there are no criteria for selection of the sample of slow learners. But a teacher may be identified in a regular classroom through his observation and based on academic

achievement of the children. So, slow learners can be identified through any of the following techniques. Most identification technique is the achievement test. So, the researcher identified the slow learner through the achievement test.

- ✓ Observation method
- ✓ Achievement test
- ✓ Personality inventory and case study

3. Causes behind Slow Learning

Slow learners are normal students who are simply not interested in studying under a traditionally acceptable system of education. There are so many factors that could cause the process of slow learning. Every behaviour has a cause, meaning, and significance. The behavioural characteristics of slow learners are symptoms of conditions or some factors present either within the child or outside the child. Slow learning is caused by a variety of factors such as:

The various causative factors behind slow learning such as

(i) Environmental factors:

- poor home conditions for learning skills,
- poor or inappropriate school opportunities (large classes),
- poor quality of teaching, low quality, and quantity of food,
- shortage of sleep,
- adverse parental attitudes towards education,
- incompatibility between home and the school,
- Frequent changes of school and consequent changes in teaching styles and content.

(ii) Emotional factors:

- dislike of teacher through classes of personality,
- negative parental attitudes to school creating in the child similar adverse attitudes,
- feeling of inadequacy,
- lack of confidence in goal achievement,
- Extreme timidity and anxiety give rise to poor levels of attainment.

(iii) Personal factors:

- long illness,
- long absence from school,
- undetected physical defects,
- poor cognitive entry characteristics.

The following are some of the causes that may be seen for slow learning.

3.1 Social Hazards

If the child experiences too many unpleasant emotions and very few of the pleasant ones, it will distort his outlook on life and encourage the development of an unpleasant disposition. The child becomes self-bound due to not receiving affection from others, and this prevents him from having an emotional exchange with them. If the child is ignored and proper care is not provided then the child builds a negative emotion and initially avoids his parents and later other people, and they isolate themselves from the outer world. Furthermore, a neglected child feels rejected, and unsecured. It may affect the developing skills of the child to socialize with other children due to these social hazards.

3.2. Teacher Partiality

Teacher care will give positive reinforcement to the future education. But some teachers show partiality towards the students which affects the learning processes and the child hates both the teacher as well as the subject. As a result, backwardness in the concerned subject and become a slow learner.

3.3 Visual Problems

Defective vision will impact studies such as they can't be able to see properly what is written on the blackboard and unable to copy it correctly. It also affects the child's growth and development and ability to function in society. And it affects self-esteem and confidence which could lead to depression. If it is not treated properly the child may be left behind in the class.

3.4 Short Attention Span

Slow learners cannot concentrate for a long time due to short attention spans. They do not remember what they learn as they have the problem of short memory. It leads to feeling bored and develops no interest in the learning process.

3.5 Inferiority Complex

The child who is hampered by overprotective parents, by fear engendered, by accidents, warnings to be careful, by environmental obstacles or by lack of opportunity to practice becomes

awkward as compared with other children of his age. He cannot keep up with them and as a result, he is left out of their play. He soon comes to think that they are better and develop an inferiority complex and slowly he would withdraw himself from his friends and learning.

3.6 Parents (Busy, Illiterate and Poor)

Slow learning children cannot cope up with the classwork, so parents' guidance and assistance are must to manage their classroom activities as well as homework. If parents are unable to spend some time with their child, he can feel unsecured and isolated. He could not share his problems or the difficulties that he faces in the school. Illiterate parents, those who mentally backward and unaware of education, do not care about the education of their child. Some parents give pressure on their children to get good marks. If not, they punish the child which worsens the situation. Usually, busy parents and poor parents go to their work early in the morning and come at late night and can't spend much time with their children and have no time for them to enquire about their studies or about their problems which result in stunting of the learning process which is possibly irretrievable.

4. Educational Opportunities to be provided for slow learners to make successful learner

If the student is identified as a slow learner, proper evaluation should be done to identify the weakness of the child and relevant strategies must be implemented to overcome the weakness. The common instructional approach is not suggestible for all the students. The goal of the teacher is to use different models in different lessons. Providing instruction in a variety of ways may attract and sustain the interest of all learners.

4.1 Psychological Analysis and Problem Solution

The teacher should maintain good rapport with the student, bringing in questions about the child's family background, his friends, personal conflicts, to know the difficulties the child is facing, if any. In this way, the teacher can psychologically analyse the problem of the child and he/she can help the child get through the problem which will be helpful to the child to study better in the future.

4.2 Find out Learning Disability

Slow learners may have a problem like dyslexia, sensory impairment or even an intellectual disability. If you suspect there may be an underlying learning disability, it is necessary to speak to the supervisor first before approaching the parents. Then, you'll need to call a meeting

with the parents to find out whether the student has been diagnosed, and depending on their answer, you'll determine what should be done next. All of this must be handled very carefully. But never assume that this is not a possibility.

4.3 Maintenance of Progress Records

Children's progress assessment is essential for recommending their entry into a higher group. A well-planned regular evaluation of the progress of the children in all round activities both curricular and co-curricular aspects. Records of evaluation should be preserved properly. Progress charts and cumulative record cards may be great help for them. These records will help to take care of everyone. Considered case history with assessments helps the teachers to provide better educational treatment for slow learners.

4.4 Appreciate at Every Success

The child should be motivated and rewarded for every success. If the teacher appreciates him with encouraging words and gives confidence, the slow learner will come out with flying colours and the sky will be the limit for them. So, reward and praise should be given immediately after the desired or correct behaviour.

4.5 List the Educational Problems

Teachers must be able to discern which group your student falls into. Shy learners are not necessarily slow, but their problem often lies in speaking out loud and a lack of confidence. Students who are not motivated are simply not interested and need to be engaged to participate fully in the class. Finally, slow learners are students who are not able to follow the current pace, i.e. they don't learn as fast as the rest of the class. If the teacher lists out any physical or mental disabilities as well as related educational problems, this simply means that learning a second language is harder for this student and that's all.

4.6 Friendly Attitude

The teacher must be a friend to the slow learner. The teacher should move with them in a friendly manner with more patience. Students learn better from people whom they love and respect. He will also feel grateful as the teacher takes more care of his studies. The mystery of all success lies only in mutual understanding, teamwork, collective effort and friendship.

4.7 Celebrate Even Small Success

The problem is not that the student can't learn, but rather that they do so at a different pace. Sometimes they simply take longer and that's all. So, there will be plenty of successes for

you to celebrate. Don't forget to encourage and offer praise in their every movement of improvement. It will boost self-confidence and help your slow learner keep putting in the effort to learn.

4.8 Alternative to Traditional Homework Tasks

Homework is an endless source of problems for the kids and the parents. The slow learner has probably worked twice in the classroom as hard as every other child did to keep up remembering all the lessons that he/she has learned in the school. So, giving them homework may cause high stress when the child gets home, so homework may be given in an easy way i.e., minimize the written work.

4.9 Provide Intensive Session

The teacher may create an opportunity for intensive sessions with a student, using individual or small group sessions. The teacher should not get bored and frustrated with the slow learner, instead, he/she can use interesting, challenging, self-correction extension works for the rest of the class while spending time with the slow learners. Sometimes these intensive sessions will bring out their inner talents.

4.10 Pair with Strong Learners to Avoid Isolation

When dividing the class into groups or teams, try to pair the slow learner with a buddy who can guide him/her. Also, always encourage respect towards those who simply don't "get" things as fast as the rest. Often, they do get in the end. Sometimes pairing with strong learner is helped as a self-motivation.

4.11 Cordial Relationship

Just a smile makes wonders in one's life. When the teacher looks at the slow learner, the smile of the teacher may change the slow learner. It makes him feel that the teacher is for him in the class and she cares for him. So, automatically the student recognizes the teacher and obeys whatever the teacher says.

4.12 Motivate to Fix a Goal

As a slow learner, he may not be able to fix a goal in his life. He does not know how to learn things and how to get good marks. So, the teacher should observe the student, inspire him and motivate him to fix a goal for his life, encourage him, and help him to achieve the same.

4.13 Recognise the Talents in the Classroom

It is always seen that in every classroom that the teacher gives importance only to the child who learns faster and not to the slow learners. Some teachers disappoint children who are not learning and getting low marks always. This is the reason that the child sits in one corner of the classroom and started doing all sorts of nonsense and creating a worst situation. Even though the teacher is running towards the completion of the syllabus, he must think about the slow learners who go near him and enquire about his learning. During question hours the teacher may give importance by recognising their talents to the slow learner and help him to answer. Giving importance may help a slow learner to come up.

4.14 Use Well Strategies of Teaching

The teacher must create hope in the classroom by applying a well strategy of teaching. Because the sense of hopelessness decreases the intellectual curiosity and active involvement in the entire learning process. Students that have learned to feel helpless in situations that are hopeless turn off, tune out and give up. When a child tries to solve the problem, he must believe that he can and will solve the problem. A child who does not believe he can solve the problem might start the process of looking for a solution but will stop before he finds the solution because he gives up. So, the teacher must teach hope in the classroom and encourage the student.

4.15 Role of the Parents

Parents should value their child as a source of happiness, an opportunity to realize their dreams to respect their goals, sometimes they are a burden, and they expect them to be with them in their old age. In these circumstances, the magic and pleasure of the child is destroyed. Parents need to establish trust and friendship with a child. They should not make the mistake of trying to force them to study their lesson. The parent must be careful, sensitive, and caring to help their child keep up with the same pace as others.

4.16 Special Programs to help Promote Successful Learners

- ☐ Individual counseling to help with personal difficulties which impede personal growth and satisfaction, as well as academic success.
- ☐ New Student Orientation program to feel welcome and prepared upon admissions into school any time during the academic year.
- ☐ Academic Counselling to help students and parents acquire knowledge of curricular choices, plan a program of studies and interpret academic opportunities.

- ☒ Career counseling to help students acquire information and plan for appropriate education and training for career choices and post-secondary goals.
- ☒ Personal/Social Counselling to assist students in developing an understanding of themselves and to respect the rights and needs of others.
- ☒ Peer Helper and Ambassador Programs train students in problem-solving, decision making, and conflict resolution.
- ☒ Academic Support Programs such as the Homework Club support students with extra help and strategies to improve academic performance across curricula.
- ☒ Small-Group Sessions focused on specific areas of identified need.
- ☒ Parent Education to support parents with frequent topics and discussion circles.

4.17 Set Realistic Expectations

Although counseling may result in significant improvement in your academic performance, you may not go from earning all C's and D's to earning straight A's. It is more likely that your improvement will be subtle and gradual. For example, after a few months of counseling, you may notice that your GPA has risen from 5.2 to 5.6. Or, you might notice that after using some of the strategies your counselor has taught you, you improved your math quiz score average from 60% to 80%. You might also notice little things, such as being able to retain more of the information that you read or hear in class or feeling less overwhelmed by your schoolwork. Keep in mind that counseling takes time to take effect. While using the strategies that you learn in your counseling sessions may provide some immediate benefits, you may not see the effects of these strategies for a few months. Try to be patient as you continue to attend counseling and use the strategies that you learn.

5. Methodology

The case study method was used which can be the best method to understand the case and factors influencing. The case study method provides the entire details about education, family and peer group. For the present study, this method will help in counseling the students to maintain rapport and for enhancement in academic achievement. Data was collected through various interactions with their parents, teachers and peer group.

6. Analysis of Data

In this study, the researcher analysed the cases through the interactions and previous teaching experiences and found that they succeeded through efficient counselling.

Example cases of successful Learner by counselling:

Case 1:

Slow learner with Multiple learning difficulties with Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia in 9th grade:

Adithya. B, 14 years, had suffered from reading, writing and maths calculations. He just passed in all subjects. His parents found that the scores in concerned subjects are not genuine as he was not able to read and write and unable to perform basic mathematical operations at his age. His Class teacher had reported to his parents that the requirement of individualized extra teaching. His parents were worried and depressed about his child. At the time the researcher had suggested to his parents that they need not worry about the problem and it could be changed through counseling. In this case, the school teachers were unable to help the child due to his multiple difficulties. But the researcher took it up and started counseling sessions. Researchers motivated the child and parents by finding the child strengths, then transformed those strengths into education to build a positive attitude and way to success. After a few meetings with teachers, peer groups and parents, researchers made the child a successful learner within a few months even though the child suffered from multiple difficulties in learning.

Case 2:

Slow learner with Multi learning difficulties with Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia at 10th grade:

Madhuri. M, 17 years, was over-aged (Re-entry for CBSE Board exams) girl in 10th grade of CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) stream syllabus due to multiple difficulties learning had suffered from reading, writing, and maths calculations. She was unable to perform addition with a single-digit number at this stage. This problem was identified by the 10th-grade maths teacher and suggests the parent to arrange any special teaching. Then the researcher motivated and created a positive attitude and started with teaching four fundamentals in mathematics. Causes behind this slow learning were illiterate parents, unfavorable school and class environment, inferiority complex. She was

also suffering from reading and writing in languages. The researcher identified the causes of slow learning and met the peer group and Maths teacher accordingly. Finally, researchers had made the child as successful learner applied by indigenous strategies of teaching with suitable educational programs.

Case 3:

Slow learner in mathematics at 12th grade:

Murali. G, 17 years, was a slow learner of mathematics of 12 grade due to not being interested in studies. As he had addicted to playing games on mobile, even he was not interested to sit for classes also which made him arrogant behaviour on his parents. His parents were too worried about his studies as well as his career. The researcher identified the case and interacted with him for 5 to 6 sessions of counseling. The researcher explained the success and failure stories of great people and also motivated him to show interest in studies by recognizing his strengths. After many sessions, the researcher made him a successful learner followed by inspiring stories of successful people.

7. Recommendations

From the findings it is evident that though the students suffering form slow learning as well as teachers from slow learners, teacher should have the confidence and create the confidence in children to overcome their slow learning through some of the following techniques.

- ✓ It is necessary to provide school counsellor to know the educational problems of children
- ✓ Homework should be assigned to the students based on their capability which should bring the inner talent related the subject assignment.
- ✓ It is necessary to focus on finding the student strengths and weakness of the individuals to give positive reinforcement for further motivation.
- ✓ Conduct the educational club to inculcate the sense of responsibility in every child who are suffering educationally.

8. Conclusion

Slow learners, though in an ordinary class ought to be the minority, just as the gifted students. They want the teacher to accompany them on their journey to success. Every child is

God's Gift, and each one is good in one thing or the other, and no child is beyond hope. Praising and motivating the child at every stage generates wonders and joy in learning. Teachers and parents must help the child to learn even from frivolous success as well as fruitful failure. By expanding the teaching styles, the teacher can support opportunities for students with different learning styles to increase their learning process. To conclude, it is only in the hands of the individual teachers to follow effective techniques, to support the slow learners and those who need additional help.

In every classroom, many slow learners are noticed. These children with borderline or mild handicaps who attend the regular class are likely to drop out if their needs are not met. It is, therefore, necessary that these children are identified early and helped in their learning. A competent teacher should be alert to the general characteristics of the associated classroom behaviour relating to the learning difficulties of a child. For example, the slow learner requires more help and time to acquire the skill than his average peer. The slow learner will rely on concrete learning rather than abstract learning.

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